

## **Complaints Handling**

A complaint is any oral or written expression of displeasure with our people, business or the services we provide which has caused the complainant to suffer financial loss, distress, inconvenience or other detriment. Internal grievances are dealt with in individual contracts.

We are required to operate a complaints handling procedure. All clients are informed in their client care letter of the firm's complaints procedure, and they are informed who to approach in the event of any problem with the service provided. All members of the staff must be aware of the procedure.

## **Complaints Handling Procedure**

At the outset of any matter the client is informed in writing of their right to complain and how complaints can be made. Clients are also informed in writing, both at the time of engagement and at the conclusion of your complaints procedure, of their right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, the time frame for doing so and full details of how to contact the Legal Ombudsman.

A client shall be provided with a Client Complaint Form if they request one or if they suggest that they have a grievance. All complaints must be referred to the Complaints Manager who is in overall charge of the complaints process. The Complaints Manager is Jonathan Eshkeri.

## **Our Complaints Policy**

We are committed to providing a high-quality legal service to all our clients. When something goes wrong, we want our clients to tell us about it. Every complaint will improve our standards and our aim is to reduce the risk of potential complaints in the future.

## **Our Complaints Procedure**

If a client has a grievance, the first step is to offer a sincere apology. Whether or not you feel that you are to blame for the issue, our clients' opinions are important and if they feel they have cause for a complaint then it is certain that we could have handled the situation better.

Secondly, see if you can solve their grievance quickly and efficiently. An example of this would be if a client feels you have not kept them up to date on a matter well enough. After offering an apology, you should give them a full update and explain when you will next contact them. You should ensure that this next contact happens as planned, and endeavour to ensure this continues throughout the retainer.

If a client suggests they have a complaint, or states that they would like to make a complaint, they should be provided with our Client Complaint Form which is easy for clients to use and understand.

## **What Will Happen Next**

All Client Complaint Forms are forwarded to the Complaints Manager.

The Complaints Manager will open a separate file for the complaint and record the details in the Firm's Complaint Management Form. This form will be kept at the front of the file. This must be done by the end of the day following receipt of the Client Complaint Form.

The Complaints Manager will then investigate the complaint, by asking the relevant members of staff to reply to the complaint or provide further details.

If necessary, the Complaints Manager will meet with the relevant members of staff to discuss the situation. The Complaints Manager will acknowledge the complaint within five working days from the date of receipt of the Client Complaint Form and will invite the complainant to a meeting to discuss the complaint and attempt to resolve it.

In any case the Firm will send a response to the complainant within eight weeks from the date of the complaint.

If the complainant is not able or does not want to attend a meeting, the Complaints Manager will explain in writing, and if possible also by telephone, the outcome of their investigations and a suggestion for resolving the complaint.

If a meeting is held, the Complaints Manager will write to the complainant within two working days of the meeting, confirming the discussions that took place and any solutions that have been agreed.

A letter sent to the complainant at this stage will contain details of what to do if the complainant is still unhappy. The complainant will be asked to write a 'secondary complaint letter' to the firm explaining why they are unhappy with the conclusion.

The firm will then arrange for a review of the Complaints Manager's decision. This will happen in one of the following ways:

- (i) Another Principal or senior member of staff will review the complaint, and if necessary, re-investigate the details of the complaint.
- (ii) The local Law Society or another firm of solicitors will be asked to review the complaint. The Complaints Manager will ask the complainant to agree to independent mediation.

The Complaints Manager will write to the complainant within five working days of the conclusion of the review, detailing the outcome of the review, and what the firm's final position is with regards to the complaint. This letter will contain details of the Legal Ombudsman, who should be contacted if the complainant is still not satisfied.

These details are:

Phone : 0300 555 0333 (Calls to the Legal Ombudsman cost the same as a normal 01 or 02 landline number, even from a mobile phone, and are recorded for training and monitoring purposes).

If you are calling from overseas, please telephone +44 121 245 3050.

Email at [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)

Address is PO Box 6167, Slough, SL1 0EH.

#### Complaints to the Legal Ombudsman

The Legal Ombudsman has given a maximum of eight weeks for the complaint to be resolved. In some cases it may be expected to be dealt with sooner if it is more desirable.

Once the eight week period has elapsed, the Legal Ombudsman will normally accept the complaint for investigation even if it has not yet been fully dealt with by the lawyer or the firm involved.

As a result of this it is preferable for us to deal with complaints quickly and try to resolve them.